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AUTHOR Ross, Roseanna Gaye
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ABSTRACT

Noting the continued growth of centers for teaching and learning on college campuses, this paper discusses the increasing involvement of speech communication professionals as directors/coordinators of such centers. The paper's first section examines the role of a communication consultant and describes the knowledge and skills needed for effective consulting. The second section explores expectations for and the role of a faculty developer. Next, the paper describes what is happening at the St. Cloud State University (SCSU) Center for Teaching Excellence. Finally, the paper discusses the indications for future speech communications professionals in this area. (Includes ten references; a statement of the SCSU Center's vision, purpose, and goals; and a description of some events sponsored by the Center.) (SR)

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Faculty Development Programs:

The Communication Professor as Internal Consultant

(Celebrating the Centrality of Communication Consulting and Training in Our Colleges and Universities)

by
Roseanna Gaye Ross

Professor, Internship Director Speech Communication
Director Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence
St. Cloud State University
St. Cloud, MN

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R. Ross

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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The role of the communication professor in faculty and instructional development is traditional and long-recognized on our campuses. The interface between communication and instruction has been underscored in Plato's discussion of dialectic, St. Augustine's dialogue "The Teacher," and Buber's discussion of the good teacher in "A Believing Humanism" (Staton, 1989). The eclectic/interdisciplinary nature of the speech communication field allows professionals to comfortably collaborate across departmental boundaries within the university, and many departments recognize that communication expertise can inform the dynamics/process within their departments. In the past 20 years as a speech communication faculty person I have provided service to faculty in other departments (not speech communication) by facilitating workshops on topics such as conflict management and problem solving, motivating work-study students, interpersonalizing lectures, and working with groups effectively in the classroom or in department meetings. Deans and program and department chairs have requested my services in facilitating planning meetings and department discussions, and in moderating panels. I expect that my experiences are not unique.

These avenues of application of our profession within our institutions, although recognized and appreciated, are sporadically implemented and far more limited than the potential of the expertise we bring. In particular, those speech communication professionals who have a broad background in communication and an expertise in communication consulting and training can become integral to the professional development movements on our campuses. Indeed, with the continued growth of centers for teaching and learning on our campuses, speech communication professionals are increasingly becoming involved as directors/coordinators of centers. In a 1996 survey of Professional and Organizational Development in Higher Education (POD) membership--a professional organization for professional developers--the number of practitioners with a graduate major in communications ranked fifth, with Business, out of 23 indicated majors (Graf and Wheeler, 1996). In the center positions, speech communication professionals are taking on the role of internal consultant to the university, not as a mere service-role, but as their defined function on the campus.

It is not surprising that speech communication professionals would find a suitable fit between their expertise areas and the responsibilities of a center director/coordinator. An examination of the role of a communication consultant, descriptions of skills needed for effective consulting, and the expectations of a professional developer and/or development activities make this interface apparent.

What Is a Communication Consultant: Definition, Knowledge, Skills?

The following discussion identifies the unique role a communication consultant plays within any organization, and the types of skills and traits necessary to be successful as a communication consultant and trainer. Key to this discussion is the role of helper and change agent, and the abilities to focus on process as well as content, to gather information, plan, work with human and public relations within an established system. In addition, a communication trainer must recognize effective teaching skills and understand the principles of adult learning.

Communication consulting is seen as a "helping activity that often causes change" (Rudolph & Johnson, 1983, p. 3). Roles of the consultant include advocate, expert, stimulator, and change agent (Pace, 1983). DeWine (1994) discusses the intervention process as actions taken by the communication consultant, designed to interrupt and change some ongoing human process. Redding (1979) differentiates between two kinds of interventions communication consultants perform--at one end of the continuum are the specific, technical skills such as a needs analysis or workshop; at the other end of the continuum are the broad-based conceptual skills such as development of a program or working on communication problems within an organization such as communication climate or conflict between departments.

DeWine (1994, p. 11-12) refers to the communication consultant as "communication manager" and identifies eight principal skills important to one's success as a communication manager: **eclectic practitioner** (able to choose from a variety of styles that mesh with those around them); **facilitator of change** (possibly not change agent, but someone who assists or helps the change process); **situational expert** ("tuned in" to the needs and issues and selecting problem solving strategies generating out of the situation); **assessor** (skilled in survey methodologies, interview and observation techniques); **process specialist and lay technician** (monitor process effectively because have a lay person's comprehension of the technical components); **internal resource identifier** (expertise among organizational members so to develop human potential); **network developer and user** (develop a support system/network among others in the system and in support of self and own areas where need additional expertise); **temporary associate** (able to judge when group or unit has taken on functions for self, and move on.)

Rudolph and Johnson (1983) identify twenty skills and eleven traits of successful communication consultants. In addition to the expected presentational, verbal and written skills, these include small group skills, meeting management, information gathering, evaluating, planning, interviewing, human relations, public relations, problem solving, organizing, listening, initiative, analysis, and critical thinking.

Arnold and McClure (1996) extend this discussion to include skills specifically related to the communication trainer. They emphasize the importance of teaching and cultural diversity skills, an awareness of the key principles of adult learning, and the ability to design, conduct and evaluate training programs. Staton (1989), in discussing the interface between communication and instruction, also addresses the significance of study of instructional communication ("the study of the human communication process as it occurs in instructional contexts," p.365) to those who want to train or consult in non-academic environments.

The above discussion underscores the specific skills and knowledge which a communication professional (specifically those professionals interested in communication consulting and training) can bring to the role of a faculty developer. The following discussion explores the role of a faculty developer.

What Is a Faculty Developer: Expectations and Roles?

In the spring of 1995 a notice of vacancy, internal search, for a half-time director for a yet-to-be-developed center for teaching and learning came across my desk. I read the following responsibilities:

> Provide leadership and expertise in the development and operation of the SCSU Teaching Center in cooperation with the Center Advisory Committee. Conduct needs assessment. Coordinate faculty teaching and learning workshops. Provide consultation with faculty on teaching methods, classroom assessment, and student learning styles. Facilitate communication between the Teaching Center and other groups on campus. Seek alternative funding sources. Prepare and disseminate periodic reports to the campus community.

When I read the above announcement, my immediate response was "I can do that!"

The position seemed to be designed for me. In fact, at the time of the announcement, I was working with a client in the community (a local bank) developing a series of professional development workshops for managers (including self development for managers--an overview, soliciting and using feedback, preparing a plan for development, making the most of training opportunities). I had been a communication consultant and trainer (outside of campus) for nearly twenty years, doing communication needs assessments, facilitating focus groups, developing in-house mentoring programs, providing one-on-one consultation to managers for effectiveness with boards and with staff, providing training in a variety of communication areas including team building, listening, meeting management, working effectively with interns, etc..

And here, on my desk, was an announcement for a position which would allow me to bring all of these types of activities and expertise areas to my "home base," where I would also have the opportunity to work long-term and continually with my "client" and see the impact of my interventions first hand! At the same time, I could maintain my teaching and student contact--important to me personally. So I applied.

I think it is safe to say that generally, the overall goal of faculty and instructional development activities is to improve the quality and effectiveness of an institution's academic programs. Rives (1979) describes the center at Illinois State University as responding to the requests of faculty "who seek to enrich their own teaching for the benefit of both their students and themselves" (p.11). A similar description would be characteristic of any center's mission.

Robert Diamond in the POD "Handbook for New Practitioners" (Wadsworth, 1988, p. 9-11) notes that usually the focus for faculty development centers can be in three areas: faculty development, instructional development, and organizational development. Although there is overlap to a point, a center may focus on one area or all three. **Faculty development** focuses on improving the teaching skills of the individual faculty--one-on-one consultation, classroom visits, etc..

Instructional development focuses on the student, course or curriculum--course design and evaluation. **Organizational development** focuses on the institution's structure and the relationship among units--workshops, seminars on teaching and learning issues and consultations with administrators.

L. Dee Fink, director of the Instructional Development Program at the University of Oklahoma, discusses strategies for establishing an instructional development program (Wadsworth,1988, p. 21-25). Strategies include networking with department chairs and other key administrators on a campus, developing self as a leader and resource in the university community, and designing programs which support dialogue and communication within the university about teaching and learning such as newsletters, faculty discussion groups, individual consultation to faculty on issues and practices in teaching and learning, and developing programs for new faculty.

Articles in the POD "Handbook for New Practitioners" (Wadsworth, 1988) guide new faculty developers in strategies for staging successful workshops, developing and utilizing faculty as resources, developing newsletters, and working with individual faculty as a consultant. The faculty developer is not seen as an expert in each faculty person's content, but as a process person able to collect and analyze data, develop and evaluate programs, facilitate groups, develop relationships, encourage collegiality and collaborate with faculty. The faculty developer is provided with advice on how to impact the culture of the institution, to influence change within the organization around teaching and learning effectiveness. In the consultant's role, developers are advised not only to keep abreast of the research in learning and motivation theory and teaching techniques, but also to be adept at listening, observing, empathizing, questioning, and reporting objectively and positively. Smith and Geis (1996), in their article "Professors as Clients for Faculty Development," discuss the consultant and client relationship, the role of the faculty developer as a change agent, and the importance of involving the professor as a partner in the change process.

As one examines the roles and expectations of a faculty developer in light of the description of the skills and knowledge of a communication professional, the semblance is conspicuous. The speech communication professional, especially the professional schooled and experienced in communication consulting and training, is a valuable asset to a faculty development center.

<u>What Is Happening at the St. Cloud State Center for Teaching Excellence?</u>

Attached you will find a statement of the SCSU Center's vision, purpose and goals, a description of some of the events which we sponsor through the Center, and a copy of our most recent newsletter. This is the beginning of the third year of the Center and my tenure as director. Because the Center is directed by a speech communication professional, one might think that the emphasis on communication may be more apparent than had a science professor established the Center. Although I do believe that each discipline informs a center in its own way, I am struck by the emphasis on communication (in a variety of forms) found in the mission and goals of most centers.

I view my role in the Center as similar to that of the "internal consultant." Although I was previously able to serve my campus in limited ways in my role as a communication professor, as a faculty developer I am moved to another level in the organization. My visibility and credibility is extended. My knowledge and skills in communication (written and verbal) and knowledge and skills in consultation and training are integral to my function. The process focus of our discipline resonates with the Center's work with collaborative and experiential learning, our efforts toward the development of a learning community, and the awareness of classrooms as communication environments. My previous experience in applied research--focus groups, surveys, interviews, and specific intervention strategies--has been tapped regularly in this new role as a faculty developer. The ability to ask critical questions, observe, analyze, give supportive descriptive feedback, and to collaborate in problem solving has served me well in the consultation process.

There have also been several areas where I have had to retool and extend my knowledge base. I have had to further my understanding of differing learning theories, and explore writings and research in the area of faculty development and classroom research. I have had to develop new support networks and resources in faculty development. But these have been enriching experiences, more easily achieved because of past experiences and my knowledge and skill base in communication consultation and training. And these experiences have informed and enhanced my own teaching and classroom.

What Are the Indications for Future Speech Communication Professionals?

It is expected that the area of faculty development at our colleges and universities will continue to grow, urged on by clamorings for accountability by legislators and the public, and by faculty endeavors to reclaim that which brought them to higher education--the desire to teach and be effective as teachers. College and university speech communication faculty should consider the move into faculty development as an excellent professional development strategy for themselves--a way to excite and energize mid-career. In advising young professionals, we would be wise to open to our students the field of faculty development as another career opportunity. Not only should we discuss faculty development as one career option for the graduate student, but we should also better prepare our graduate students for an eventual move into this career by requiring courses in instructional communication and in communication consulting and training. As professors, we should share with our students stories and examples of the consulting and training opportunities we have had as internal consultants to our organization--the university/college campus.

In all likelihood, the involvement of communication professionals in faculty development on our campuses will, and should, increase. In appreciating the centrality of communication consulting and training, it is critical that the contributions of the internal communication consultant to effective teaching and successful learning on our college campuses and universities is emphasized and celebrated.

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Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

Center Vision and Goals

- **Vision**
- **Purpose**
- **Goals**
- **Clientele**
- **Privacy Statement**

Vision:
"Promoting Good Conversation About Good Teaching"

Purpose:
The St. Cloud State University Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence promotes good conversation about good teaching by providing resources and strategies to support, strengthen and recognize excellent and innovative teaching for active learning.

Goals:
1. Facilitate faculty dialogue and continued education about learning paradigms, teaching methodology, and other issues critical to effective teaching and learning.

2. Support faculty individual efforts to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness.

3. Provide opportunities for partnerships within and across disciplines, within and outside the academic institution.

4. Support integration of research/scholarship and teaching effectiveness.

5. Support and recognize effective and innovative teaching.

Clientele:
The Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence is open to anyone in the SCSU academic community interested in excellence in teaching.

Approved by Advisory Committee 10/20/95
Approved by Faculty Association Senate 11/7/95

Privacy Statement:
The SCSU Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence exists to serve the teaching community of St. Cloud State University. Information about specific individuals who participate in activities and utilize services provided by the Center is considered confidential by the Center staff. General data will be collected and reported anonymously to identify faculty needs or Center use patterns.

Approved by Advisory Committee 11/3/95

FACULTY FORUM

Description and Suggestions for Facilitation

Date: Second Thursday of each month

Time: 1:00-3:00 p.m. reserved; expect presentation and discussion time to fill 1 1/2 hours. Refreshments will be provided, and a Center representative will be available to introduce facilitators.

Place: North Glacier Room, Atwood Center

Purpose:

--To facilitate faculty dialogue on selected issues of teaching and learning;

--To renew and continue faculty education in areas of teaching and learning;

--To recognize and support efforts and innovation in areas of teaching and learning;

--To provide resources for faculty who wish to continue study or application following the Forum.

Suggestions for Facilitation:

The primary goal of the forum is to stimulate and facilitate faculty dialogue. Therefore, the Center encourages facilitation be shared between two or more faculty, that the format of the Forum be interactive and/or experiential, and the facilitators be prepared to encourage and manage discussion.

One approach would be for facilitators to utilize the first half hour for the discussion stimulus, and then work with discussion or participation in the last hour. To stimulate discussion, facilitators might present a concept, share a perspective, show a film, perform a demonstration, or facilitate an exercise which would serve as the springboard for the discussion. Whatever the facilitators' approach, it would be expected that approximately 1/2-2/3 of the Forum time would be comprised of participant involvement through conversation, application, etc.

The Forum is an initial entry into the discussion. Faculty should not only leave the forum with ideas and insights, but also with strategies for following up on those ideas. It is recommended that facilitators provide a list of resources, sample syllabi or assignments, model papers, names of contacts on and off campus, etc..., so that participants can continue their exploration of the issues. **Please forward a copy of this material to CH 1 for the Resource Room file.**

The Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence appreciates your willingness to share your expertise with your colleagues. Please direct any questions or comments to Roseanna Ross, CH1, 654-5282. Thank you.

FACULTY CENTER FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

BOOK TALK

Description:

Book Talks provide opportunities for a group of faculty persons to read and discuss books representing current writing on teaching and learning. Each Book Talk is facilitated by a faculty person(s) who has volunteered to guide the discussion. Faculty members self-nominate to participate in the Book Talk, agreeing to meet with the group on the day(s) and time(s) designated by the facilitator. In turn, the Center for Teaching Excellence purchases a copy of the selected book for the discussion participants (at no cost to participants). The selection of specific book titles may be suggested by the facilitator, and/or may be suggested to interface with other teaching/learning programs, speakers, discussions on the campus.

Purpose:

--To facilitate faculty dialogue on selected issues of teaching and learning;
--To renew and continue faculty education in areas of teaching and learning;
--To create/extend faculty dialogue around programs, speakers, workshops offered by other initiatives, departments, or centers on campus.

Scheduling:

One or two Book Talks will be scheduled quarterly. The facilitator will determine the number of meeting times, and select the dates and times.

Registration:

The Center for Teaching Excellence will mail an announcement of the Book Talk to faculty, identifying the book title, dates, facilitator, and registration details. Faculty who register for the Book Talk will receive a copy of the book to read prior to the discussion meeting.